



## EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon

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### PRESS RELEASE

## ***SAMIR KASSIR AWARD FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS***

### **The European Union rewards three journalists from Egypt, Tunisia and Syria, winners of the 2014 edition**

The Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon organised today, in the presence of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis and in collaboration with the Samir Kassir Foundation, the ceremony for the Samir Kassir Award for Freedom of the Press.

The winners of the 2014 edition are the following:

- **Mohamed Abo El-Ghit** (Egyptian) published his article "Season of the living dead" in Al-Shorouk newspaper on 3 January 2014. He describes the violent clashes that opposed, before the ouster of former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, supporters and opponents of the Muslim Brotherhood. He deplores the "herd" mentality that pushed people from both sides to resort to the worst levels of violence.
- **Hanene Zbiss** (Tunisian) published her investigative article "Quranic kindergartens in Tunisia" in the Tunisian magazine "Réalités" on 10 October 2013. Her article describes how Tunisia has witnessed, since the January 2011 uprising, the proliferation of so-called "Quranic kindergartens," established by religious associations.
- **Orwa Mokdad** (Syrian), journalist and film maker. His audiovisual report "Syrian Music" portrays young Syrian singers and musicians living in Beirut. It illustrates how Syrian conflict also affects the arts and documents how young people combat violence through art.

The Samir Kassir Award for Freedom of the Press is granted by the European Union, and rewards journalists who have distinguished themselves through the quality of their work and their commitment to human rights and democracy. Organised every year since 2006, the Samir Kassir Award honours the memory of the Lebanese journalist Samir Kassir who was assassinated on 2 June 2005 in Beirut. The competition is open to countries in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf. This year, the 180 applications received bring the total of participants since the creation of the award to over 1380. The award in each of the three categories is worth €10 000.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis highlighted how freedom of expression online and offline is essential for the fulfilment and enjoyment of a wide range of other human rights, including freedom of association and assembly, freedom of thought, religion or belief, the right to education, the right to take part in cultural life, the right to vote and all other political rights related to participation in public affairs. According to EUSR Lambrinidis "Without

freedom of expression and freedom of the media, an informed, active and engaged citizenry is impossible."

The Head of the Delegation of the European Union, Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, underlined that "the yearly edition of this unique award is a tangible proof of the EU's unwavering support to freedom of expression as a key element of deep democracy." According to Ambassador Eichhorst "journalists pay a high price to expose abuses and raise awareness about violations of fundamental rights. Rewarding excellence in journalism needs to be distinguished because our ability to act as informed citizens of the world also depends on media that can work freely and safely."

As in previous years, an independent jury selected the winners. It comprised seven personalities from Europe and the Middle East: Ghaith Abdul-Ahad (Iraq), correspondent of The Guardian; Sanaa El-Aji, (Morocco), journalist and writer; Hind Darwish (Lebanon), founding member of the Samir Kassir Foundation; Marc Marginedas (Spain), special war correspondent of the Barcelona-based El Periódico; Laila El-Raiy (Egypt), journalist and writer; Christoph Reuter (Germany), correspondent of Der Spiegel; and Marc Saikali (Lebanon-France), journalist and director of France 24. The award ceremony was hosted by Mona Wehbi, journalist at Al-Hurra TV.

All information about the 2014 edition of the Samir Kassir Award for Freedom of the Press, the winning articles and audiovisual report are available on the website [www.samirkassiraward.org](http://www.samirkassiraward.org)

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